

Racialization and “Southern” Identities of Resistance: A Psychogeography of Internal Orientalism in the United States

David Jansson

Department of Social and Economic Geography, Uppsala University

This article examines the “voices of the Others” of internal orientalism in the United States. Internal orientalism creates a binary of the imagined spaces of “America” and “the South,” simultaneously racializing both spaces as white spaces. The article explores the extent to which this discourse informs a “Southern” resistance identity among members of the white “Southern” nationalist organization the League of the South, and African American residents of Lynchburg, Virginia. An analysis of interviews shows that for the League members, internal orientalism produces a psychogeography wherein “Southerners” feel that they are considered an inferior part of the “American” nation, which they might experience as hatred and demonization. To combat a colonial mentality, the League advances a positive notion of “Southern” identity that emphasizes the theme of resistance. The essentialist version of “Southern” identity they espouse is ultimately a derivative discourse in that it does not unsettle the internal orientalist assumption that “the South” is fundamentally different from “the North” and “America.” Those African Americans in the study who embrace “Southern” identity resist the internal orientalist racialization of “Southern” as referring to white people, although to the extent they associate “Southern” identity with racism and segregation they partly reinforce the discourse. Some who do not embrace “Southern” identity cannot overcome its negative connotations. The study shows that articulations of “the South” and “Southern” identity are best understood from an interscalar perspective and not by considering “Southernness” as something produced solely in “the South.” **Key Words:** *internal orientalism, psychogeography, racism, resistance, U.S. South.*

本文探讨了在美国的内部东方主义者所谓的“其他声音。”内部东方主义创建了一个想象空间里二分的“美国”和“南方,”同时将两个空间种族化为白人的空间。文章探讨了在何种程度上这种语境能够从白人的“南方”民族主义组织,南方联盟,和弗吉尼亚州林奇堡非洲裔居民等不同的成员之间,标识出一个“南方”抵抗成员的身份。访谈的分析表明,该联盟的成员,内部东方主义者创作了一种心理地理,使“南方人”感到他们被认为是“美国”国家的次等部分,他们可能会因此而经历仇恨和妖魔化。为了打击殖民心态,联盟发展了积极意义的“南方”概念,以强调抵抗的主题。他们所主张的关于“南方”身份的本质版本其实终究是一种衍生的话语,因为它并不动摇内部东方主义者的假设,既“南方”与“北方”和“美国”是根本不同的。研究中的那些非裔美国人,他们接受“南方”的身份,抵制内部东方主义者种族化的“南方”概念,既它是专指白人的“南方,”尽管在某种程度上他们把“南方”身份与种族主义和种族隔离相关联实际上加强了那部分语境。有些不接受“南方”身份的人无法克服其消极的含义。这项研究表明,关于“南方”和“南方人”身份的表述,最好的理解要从一个跨标量的角度出发,并且不能将“南方性”当作“南方”一词所单独生产的东西。关键词: 内部东方主义, 心理地理学, 种族主义, 抵抗, 美国南方。

Este artículo examina las “voices de los Otros” del orientalismo interno en los Estados Unidos. El orientalismo interno crea un binario de los espacios imaginados de “América” y “el Sur,” racializando simultáneamente ambos espacios como espacios blancos. El artículo explora la extensión con la que este discurso informa una identidad de resistencia “sureña” entre miembros de la organización nacionalista “sureña” blanca, la Liga del Sur, y residentes afroamericanos de Lynchburg, Virginia. El análisis de la entrevistas muestra que para los miembros de la Liga, el orientalismo interno produce una psicogeografía dentro de la cual los “sureños” sienten que a ellos se les considera como una parte inferior de la nación “americana,” que ellos bien podrían experimentar como odio y demonización. Para combatir una mentalidad colonial, La Liga propone una noción positiva de la identidad “sureña” que resalta el tema de la resistencia. La versión esencialista de la identidad “sureña” por la que ellos abogan en últimas es un discurso derivado en el cual no se desmonta el supuesto orientalista interno de que “el Sur” es fundamentalmente diferente de “el Norte” y “América.” Aquellos afroamericanos del estudio que

admiten la identidad “sureña” resisten la racialización orientalista interna de lo “sureño” en lo que se refiere a la gente blanca, aunque hasta donde ellos asocian identidad “sureña” con racismo y segregación en parte, al menos, refuerzan el discurso. Algunos de quienes no admiten la identidad “sureña” no pueden superar sus connotaciones negativas. El estudio muestra que las articulaciones de “el Sur” y la identidad “sureña” son mejor entendidas desde una perspectiva interescalal y no considerando la “suridad” como algo producido solamente en “el Sur.” *Palabras clave: orientalismo interno, psicogeografía, racismo, resistencia, el Sur de EE.UU.*

“**T**he South” in U.S. discourse constitutes an emotionally loaded geographic idea. For centuries, the imagined space of “the South” has embodied the antithesis of what it means to be American. “The South” continues to be seen by many as different, radically deviant from national norms, and this difference is often located in a foundation of racism. According to one observer, the region “maintains a tainted history . . . one filled with racially-motivated violence and oppression, a heritage of hatred” (Niemeyer 2005, 2, quoted in Newman 2007, 335). Racism is not the sole marker of difference, however, for “the South” has also been seen as “provincial, conservative, fundamentalist, nativist, violent, conformist, [and] militarist” (Zinn 1964, 217). This picture of “the South” is simultaneously racialized, as the preceding characteristics refer to *white* “Southerners.”

This discourse creates an essentialist binary of the imagined spaces of “America” and “the South,” such that representations of “the South” inform the meaning of “America,” and I consider this binary an instance of internal orientalism (Jansson 2003a, 2003b, 2004, 2005a, 2007). My work thus far has explored the voice of the Self, in that it has assessed representations of “the South” that were generated from a national perspective (even if sometimes created by “Southerners”). These studies unsettle the spatial uniformity of national identity within nation-states and emphasize the importance of an internal spatial Other to the production of national identity. What remains to be explored is the voice of the Other within internal orientalism and how such voices articulate resistance to the discourse.

The framework of internal orientalism is inspired by the work of Said (1979, 1993), and one of the primary criticisms of Said’s initial take on orientalism was that he ignored the role of the voice of the Other and anti-orientalist resistance (Chatterjee 1986; Carrier 1992; Jewitt 1995; Christophers 2007). In the years since, Said and others have responded such that one can scarcely write about orientalisms or colonialisms now without foregrounding resistance (e.g., González-Cruz 1998; Morin and Berg 2001; Boehmer

2002; Duncan 2002; Given 2002; O’Loughlin 2002; Ashcroft 2004; Bryant 2004; Morrissey 2004; Murdoch 2005; Walker 2005; Carswell 2006; Goh 2007). These studies, however, generally do not explore the psychology of resistance, and it is one of the primary goals of this article to investigate the psychogeography of the resistance to (or accommodation of) internal orientalism and how this resistance relates to the production of “Southern” identities. By *psychogeography* I mean the psychological experience of discursive spatial relations; thus I use the term differently than those who write in the British tradition of psychogeography (see Bonnett 2009).

In this article I explore the voice of the Other within internal orientalism, although as I show, there are at least two groups of Others involved here. My data come from interviews conducted in 2003 with members of the “Southern” nationalist organization League of the South, and with African Americans in the Lynchburg, Virginia, area. I consider the production of “Southern” identity by the respondents in the context of internal orientalism’s representations of “the South” and examine the extent to which resistance is an important element in the conceptualization of “Southern” identity. I emphasize the psychological experience of the discourse and the impact on the respondents’ feelings about “the South.” In this exploration of the psychogeography of internal orientalism, I highlight the interscalar nature of “Southern” identity production, as the meanings of “the South” are not generated solely within the region. I thus investigate how the racialization of the imagined space of “the South” and the negative stereotypes of the region influence the views of black and white “Southerners.”

The connection between resistance and identity has been framed in the literature in various ways. Routledge (1992) argued that the resistance movement in Baliapal, India, against the transformation of the area by the government was informed by a vibrant sense of place (i.e., local identity). The collective imagining of a local culture inspired the production of what Routledge called a “terrain of resistance.” Castells (1997, 8) referred to this as a “resistance identity,”

which is “generated by those actors that are in positions/conditions devalued and/or stigmatized by the logic of domination, thus building trenches of resistance and survival on the basis of principles different from, or opposed to, those permeating the institutions of society.” What results is “the exclusion of the excluders by the excluded” (Castells 1997, 9), which creates “spaces of resistance” that allow the resisters to operate at least partially outside the practices of domination (Pile 1997, 16). Furthermore, as Johnston (1994, 267) argued, “the goals and activities of ethnic nationalist movements are thoroughly embedded in the identity of their proponents,” where experiences of perceived oppression can be politicized to highlight a sense of national difference (R. Jones and Desforges 2003). What these studies show is that resistance against oppression is often informed by constructions of identity, and we see here that certain constructions of identity can also *create* a sense of oppression. Resistance to internal orientalism in the United States is grounded in a reaction against the dominant imagining of “the South,” and the racializations of internal orientalism shape this resistance in different ways.

I begin by reviewing the notion of resistance in the context of orientalism and internal orientalism. Next I consider the views of the League of the South members and show how their strategies for resisting internal orientalism reveal the ways in which they experience the discourse. Then I discuss the views of the African Americans in Lynchburg and how their acceptance or rejection of “Southern” identity intersects with internal orientalism. In the conclusion I address some potential criticisms of this line of argument.

First, a note about style. I use scare quotes when referring to “the South” and “America” (and their derivatives) to problematize the meaning of these terms and emphasize their constructedness. Different people mean different things when they use these terms; for example, “Southerner” has long been understood to mean “white Southerner” (Webster and Leib 2001).¹ Cobb (1999) argues that this convention is changing, but there is still variability in usage and it is not always easy to know what is intended by the writer or speaker. Similarly, the term “America” is problematic when referring to the United States, as people throughout North, Central, and South America embrace the label “American.” The quotation marks seek to “denaturalize the terms, to designate these signs as sites of political debate” (Butler 1992, 19). When I desire a purely locational definition of “the South,” I refer to “the southeastern states.”

Orientalisms and Geographic Identity

Whereas other scholars had previously identified the role of an Other in identity construction (e.g., de Beauvoir 1949; Barth 1969), Said’s essential contribution involved explaining the production of national and supranational identities by weaving together different imagined geographies within a matrix of power relations. Said argued that “the Orient” served as an Other against which an “Occidental” identity was defined (Said 1979). To condense Said’s argument, we can think of Orientalism as the material domination of the Occident over the Orient; a style of representing the Orient; and the construction of the essentialized identities “Occidental” and “Oriental.” Orientalism also represents a characteristic attitude with which the Self approaches the Other; one of the most basic aspects of Orientalism is the deep-rooted belief that “a fundamental ontological difference exists between the essential natures of the Orient and Occident, to the decisive advantage of the latter” (al-Azm 1981, 6).

Said was influenced by Foucault’s (1980) notion of power/knowledge; the knowledge generated by Orientalism shapes and is shaped by the power relations between Occident and Orient (as well as between individuals and groups within each place). Said also emphasized, however, that such relations produce identities that give the participants a subjective location from which to engage Others. Although Said did not use the term, he was really referring to “power/knowledge/identity,” a modification that Carolan and Bell (2003, 226) recommend because it recovers “the actors and concrete social relations that produce discourse, and are not only produced by it.” The relevance of this formulation to Orientalism (and internal orientalism) is that it productively foregrounds the role of agents that are endowed with an identity that configures their power-geometries in particular ways (aligned with the discourses of Orientalism or internal orientalism). It is the intersection of power/knowledge/(geographic) identity that constitutes Orientalism’s discursive structure.

As one of the flaws of Said’s Orientalism was thought to be his lack of attention to the voice of the Other, many scholars since have evaluated the reaction of the oppressed to orientalist power relations. Such studies have concluded that nationalist resistance ultimately strengthens the essentialist binary being resisted and affirms the epistemology that insists on the difference between the collective Selves and Others. An example is “Occidentalism” (Carrier 1992; Wang 1997; Sadiki

1998; Chen 2002), a kind of “Orientalism in Reverse” (al-Azm 1981) where people in “the Orient” other “the Occident.” Such nationalisms adopt the essentialist binary of Orientalism but reverse the valorization, so that “the Orient” is placed in a privileged position in relation to “the Occident” (McIntyre 1996). Chatterjee (1986, 38), for example, argued that, even though it is ostensibly aimed at liberation for the oppressed, anticolonial nationalist thinking is inherently contradictory “because it reasons within a framework of knowledge whose representational structure corresponds to the very structure of power nationalist thought seeks to repudiate.” He labels such nationalist thinking a “derivative discourse.”

In a vital contribution, Nandy emphasized the importance of psychology to colonial relationships, as the power relations of colonialism generate certain psychological tendencies that shape the understanding of both colonizer and colonized of themselves and their position vis-à-vis the Other. As Nandy (1983, 1) pointed out, minds as well as bodies are subject to colonization: “the first differentia of colonialism is a state of mind in the colonizers and the colonized.” Colonialism is a “psychological state” that “includes codes which both the rulers and the ruled can share” (Nandy 1983, 2). This article explores some of the complexities in the sharing of internal orientalism’s codes in the southeastern states through a focus on the theme of resistance. As suggested by Nandy, it is important to understand the constructions of identity that inform the psychological aspects of acts of resistance (see also Fanon 1963).

Orientalism is a form of “territorial script” that seeks internal cohesion by generating a distinction between the nation and “an opposing Other” (Herb 2004, 142). The Other of Orientalism is external to the state where the othering is initiated, and scholars have also noted the relevance of internal Others in developing a national sense of Self (Jewitt 1995; Yiftachel 1998; MacLaughlin 1999; Agnew 2000; Knippenberg 2002). This phenomenon has been called *internal orientalism* (Schein 1997), *domestic Orientalism* (Piterberg 1996), and *Oriental Orientalism* (Gladney 1994). These studies, though, conceptualize internal orientalism as an othering based primarily on demographic characteristics (race, gender, religion, etc.) rather than seeing it also as a spatial process. Because “a spatial dimension is usually inherent in the definitions of the Other” (Paasi 1996, 13), it is important to theorize internal orientalism in geographic terms. Indeed, Said’s elaboration of Orientalism was inherently spatial (Katz and Smith 2003, 635; D. Gregory 1997, 2004; but to Kobayashi [2004] Said’s

conception of space is disappointingly container-like). From a geographic perspective, internal orientalism involves the othering of a subordinate region within a national state that contributes to the construction of a national identity. These representations create a “contrapuntal ensemble” (Said 1993, 52) out of the imagined spaces of the region and the nation, a device that essentializes both identities simultaneously.

In the United States, “the South” functions as an archetypal internal spatial Other. The region has long been considered the most distinctive in the country (Vance 1935; Woodward 1993; Frank 1999); as Agnew (1987, 89) notes, “the North” has traditionally been considered the mainstream of America, whereas “the South” has been isolated for its distinctiveness, and many argue that the region has maintained its distinctiveness in the present (Grantham 1995; Webster and Leib 2001). It is important to note that “the South” is not just seen as different but also contrary to national norms (Woodward 1993; Grantham 1995), and it is this radical opposition to “American” values that expresses the structure of the internal orientalist binary (Figure 1). The notion that “the South” is an internal Other “has run through a good deal of writing on the region” (Carlton 1995, 34), and there have been earlier hints at an understanding that “the South” is caught up in an orientalist dynamic. As early as 1950, Frank Owsley, a contributor to the 1930 “Southern” Agrarian

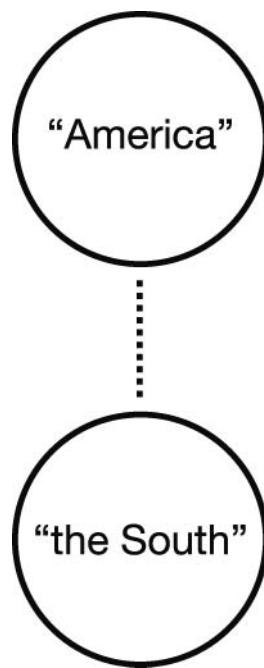


Figure 1. The binary of internal orientalism.

manifesto *I'll Take My Stand*, argued that “much of the bitter resentment of backward peoples in the Orient against what they term . . . ‘Yankee imperialism’ is similar to that felt by the contributors” to that volume (Reed 1993b, 31). At the end of the century, Burns (1991, 121) saw the work of Spivak and Said as relevant to the analysis of the production of “the South,” Hale (1998, 156) referred to “Southernness” as “our home-grown ‘Orientalism,’” and Roberts (1994, 29) saw the region as “America’s domestic Orient, its secret self, its Other.” Furthermore, various scholars have employed a post-colonial perspective in analyses of “the South” (Greeeson 1999; Winders 2005; Duck 2006); however, these authors have not advanced this insight into a fully developed study of internal orientalism, which would involve not only assessing representations of “the South” within the framework of internal orientalism (e.g., Jansson 2003a, 2003b, 2005a) but also investigating how the discourse shapes understandings of “Southern” identity among residents of the southeastern states. This article is a contribution to the latter effort.

Here I briefly consider examples of some of the complexities of internal orientalism in the United States. Although representations of “the South” as racist, xenophobic, poor, violent, and the like infuse the characteristics of tolerance, openness, prosperity, and peacefulness to an exalted “American” identity, there is also a history of positive portrayals of “the South” that focus in particular on friendliness, hospitality, devotion to place, and devotion to family (see Jansson 2003a). Such a depiction mirrors the ambivalence of Orientalism (Duncan 1993; Bhabha 1994; Nadel-Klein 1995) and does not necessarily hinder internal orientalism. Schein (2000, 130) argued in her study of internal orientalism in China that the internal Others “remained consigned to a secondary position in the Chinese social order—no matter how stridently their quaint practices were lauded in public discourse.” Roberts has reviewed the gendered nature of internal orientalism in the United States, noting that “the South was represented in early narratives as a female body to be penetrated, ravished, exploited and impregnated, a landscape of breasts and genitals displayed for the ‘use’ and ‘enjoyment’ of the European colonizer” (Roberts 1994, 27). In addition, class intersects with internal orientalism, as the classic stereotypes of “the South” tend to focus on lower class whites (J. Smith 2002) to the point that “in our national consciousness the Southern middle class is effectively invisible” (Reed 1982, 121), even in much of the region’s historiography (Wright 2001). There is also the phenomenon of “nested othering” (cf.

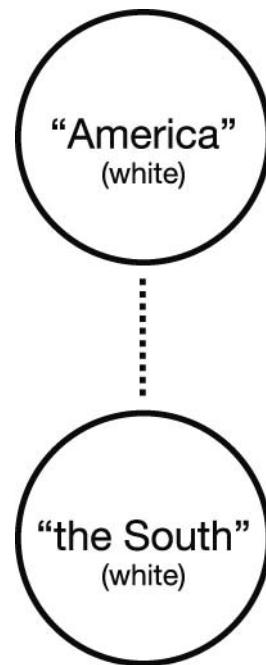


Figure 2. The racialized imagined spaces of “America” and “the South.”

Bakić-Hayden 1995) within the southeastern states, as some white residents of the region attempt to distance themselves from whites in other parts of the region (Ayers 1996; J. N. Gregory 2005); African Americans also participate in this process: “Even black folks in Alabama will say, ‘Forget Mississippi’” (Walton 1996, 150).

The focus of this article, though, is on the racializations of internal orientalism. As Orientalism is embodied through its racializations (Kobayashi 2004), so does internal orientalism depend on the racialization of the imagined spaces of “America” and “the South,” a process that constructs the archetypal “American” (Hale 1998; Kobayashi and Peake 2000; Omi and Winant 2002) and “Southerner” (Reed 1975; Sullivan 1996; Webster and Leib 2001) as white. Thus “America” and “the South” cannot be seen as white spaces without the concurrent embodiment of “American” and “Southerner” as white (Figure 2). Internal orientalism, then, is largely (although not exclusively) a process of white people othering each other.² African Americans might identify with the identities “American” and “Southerner,” but as they are othered in the production of these identities, their connection to them within the discourse of internal orientalism is never complete (Figure 3). African Americans are the key “structuring absence” (Shohat 1989, 6), especially to the extent that the distinctiveness of “the South” is thought to inhere in the

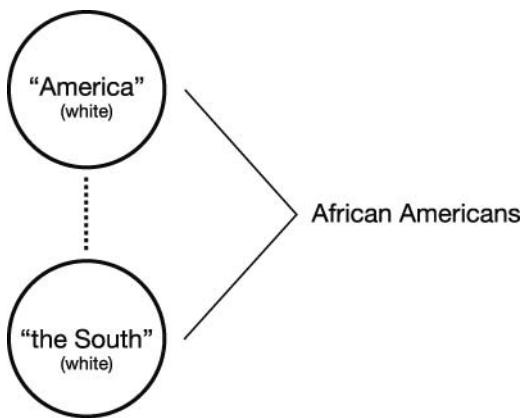


Figure 3. The relationship of black “Southerners” to internal orientalism.

racist treatment of African Americans by the region’s white residents (Egerton 1974; Kuklinski, Cobb, and Gilens 1997); as D. J. Smith (1997, 378) put it, “race” is “central to the maintenance of this North/South binary opposition.” In the case of African Americans in “the South,” what is absent is their agency, as their bodily presence (however silent) is necessary to internal orientalism, with black residents of the southeastern states playing a background role in the morality play between white “Americans” and “Southerners.”³ So the main thrust of internal orientalist constructions of “the South” is directed at the region’s white residents. This suggests that white “Southerners” would most directly experience the psychological force of internal orientalism, but this certainly does not rule out the possibility that the discourse could affect African Americans.⁴ This article explores the psychological experiences of the discourse in the context of resistance.

I first consider the resistance of members of the League of the South and then explore the extent to which African Americans in Lynchburg resist the internal orientalist imaginings of “the South.”

Resistance Identity and the League of the South

The League of the South was founded in 1994 with the purpose of defending a particular notion of “Southern” identity and culture, reclaiming a positive and largely racialized view of what it means to be “Southern” (Hague 2002; Taylor 2002) and advocating a withdrawal of the southeastern states from the “American” empire through the formation of a “Southern” republic. According to Bahrenberg (1993), resistance movements are often facilitated by a regional elite who

capitalize on a feeling of economic peripheralization and a sense of social discrimination, driven by fear of losing their own power and privileges. The League’s leaders are certainly not within the mainstream “regional elite” in the southeastern states, but they are mostly highly educated and occupy positions of prestige (many are university professors), and they certainly attempt to capitalize on (and cultivate) the sense of oppression felt by a number of white residents of the region. The League has made effective use of the Internet to spread its message (Warf and Grimes 1997; McPherson 2000) and runs a “summer school” every year, a week-long conference featuring presentations on a given theme (Wilson 2002). I attended the 2003 summer school in Abbeville, South Carolina, when the theme was “Our Confederate Heroes.” I conducted sixteen interviews there, and after the meeting seven additional people completed questionnaires, resulting in twenty-three respondents.

The League of the South truly feels that “Southerners” are othered by the rest of the country, and therefore to get an understanding of how internal orientalism is experienced by individuals this is certainly an appropriate group to study. The League is rather marginal in terms of numerical support, however, and they have been labeled a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC; Webster and Kidd 2002; Beirich and Potok 2004), as well as a white supremacist organization (Taylor 2002), based on their linking “Southern” identity to a presumed Celtic heritage and on their opposition to immigration into the region; however, some of their views are probably not as extreme and unrepresentative as many would like to think; for example, the Southern Focus Poll has shown consistently that an average of roughly 10 percent of residents of the southeastern states would like independence (i.e., they support secession) if it could be achieved by peaceful means.⁵ A recent Zogby poll found that 22 percent of those polled nationally said that any state or region has the right to “peaceably secede from the United States and become an independent republic,” and 24 percent of the residents of the southeastern states questioned said they would support a secessionist movement in their own state (Ketcham 2008). So the League’s desire for a new “Southern” secession is not completely without a base of support. Many of their activities, such as defending “Southern heritage,” are also supported by somewhat more mainstream groups like Sons of Confederate Veterans and United Daughters of the Confederacy (which are not listed by the SPLC as hate groups). Although I cannot

claim that the views of the League are representative of all white “Southerners,” it is safe to say that some aspects of their responses to internal orientalism would be shared by other white “Southerners” who would not necessarily support the League’s agenda in its entirety.

The League members I talked to were quite aware of the internal orientalist perception of “Southerners” as an inferior species of “American.” When asked what being a “Southerner” meant to him, Kevin⁶ replied:

Well, it’s a rather difficult question, because in today’s environment . . . we are looked upon culturally from the country as a whole as a negative part of the American experiment. I choose not to accept that point of view as an individual, and from one perspective it’s a burden because we have always been an underdog.

There was a consistent focus on the negative stereotypes of “the South” in the interviews, with scarcely a mention of the positive stereotypes. This might be a reflection of the fact that negative stereotypes are more strategically useful to a nationalist organization like the League, but it might also reflect the greater psychological power of negative stereotypes; no matter how much someone might praise you, it is his or her insults that you are most likely to remember (and resent).

For some, the experience of these negative perceptions of “the South” became so intense that it led to a change in consciousness.

I always thought of myself as an American until 1996. That’s when years of snide comments from business associates finally rose up to the point that I realized Yankees still think of us as different, and in an inferior way. I also realized at the same time where their domination was taking this country, and I did not like what I saw. (Mark, questionnaire)

What his business associates might have considered good-natured ribbing finally brought Mark to the breaking point, causing him shift his sense of nationality from “American” to “Southern.”⁷ This shift is an example of an important difference between Orientalism and internal orientalism, because in the latter case individuals in the othered region are still part of the nation that is associated with the national state. This means that, in the case of the United States, “Southerners” who feel that they are being othered will either shift their allegiance to a “Southern” nation or, if they retain some attachment to the national identity, define what it means to be an “American” in a way that is more consistent with their “Southern” consciousness (or vice versa). Contrast this with Said’s (1993, 19) comment that “If while sitting in Oxford, Paris, or New York you

tell Arabs or Africans that they belong to a basically sick or unregenerate culture, you are unlikely to convince them.” Because identities at the national scale tend to be so powerful, the discourse of internal orientalism might have a better chance to convince residents of the othered region that their culture is “basically sick or unregenerate” than has Orientalism to persuade “Arabs or Africans.” This suggests that the opposition to internal orientalism might be more scarce or splintered than that to Orientalism, as a segment of the othered region takes the escape route of identifying with the national identity and values (although a comparable phenomenon is not necessarily unheard of in the context of Orientalism).

For some League members, the frequent messages that tell them they are not as good as other “Americans” result in what Nandy (1983, 1) referred to as a “colonial consciousness.” As Ben put it:

And this is one of the things we’re facing even today, we’re facing our children here in the South being indoctrinated with this sort of red-headed stepchild mentality, and that’s putting it one way, Dr. Kibler likes to call it the colonial mentality.

He is referring to James Kibler, a professor of English at the University of Georgia and associate director of the League of the South Institute (LSI), the arm of the League that organizes the summer schools. Kibler raised the idea of the “colonial mentality” during his presentation at the summer school. In that talk Kibler argued that this colonial mentality is a terrible thing for “Southerners” because “it takes away your sense that you can do things.” Kibler felt that to get “Southerners” to start fighting their subordination, they must first have a sense of their own agency and value their “Southern” identity. For Kibler and other League members, one of the most urgent tasks was the redefinition and defense of “Southern” heritage and identity.⁸ Indeed, Kevin said that his involvement with the League made it easier for him to stand up to what he referred to as “the popular culture of the country to hate the South,” and he acknowledged that the League’s activities helped him formulate a more positive “Southern” identity.

Said distinguished between primary resistance (fighting off the colonizers) and secondary or ideological resistance, which involves the reconstitution of a positive collective identity and national values that were destroyed by colonialism (Said 1993, 209). We might think of the Civil War as constituting the primary resistance (however unsuccessful for the Confederacy) of “the South” (as defined by the League), whereas the

League presently engages in ideological resistance, and that effort requires the (re)construction of a positive sense of what it means to be a “Southerner.”

There is a fascinating parallel here between Kibler’s argument and a point raised by Gramsci. The task of developing an accurate critique of Orientalism, wrote Said, required that he deal with aspects of his “contemporary reality” (Said 1979, 8) that might, if unacknowledged, distort his analysis. One of these aspects was the personal dimension, and Said (1979, 25) discussed how being a Palestinian influenced his point of view:

In the *Prison Notebooks* Gramsci [1971, 324] says: “The starting-point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and is ‘knowing thyself’ as a product of the historical process to date, which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory.” The only available English translation inexplicably leaves Gramsci’s comment at that, whereas in fact Gramsci’s Italian text concludes by adding, “therefore it is imperative at the outset to compile such an inventory.”⁹

Said went on to assess the personal and social context within which he was working and the forces that have shaped his views, in a sense a step toward compiling a Gramscian inventory. In a way, this is what Kibler and the League members do when they begin to confront the ways in which internal orientalism has shaped their perceptions of “Southern” identity. There is no theoretical reason, then, that Gramsci’s dictum be restricted to individuals or movements on the Left. From Kibler’s perspective, a Gramscian inventory would reveal the presence (and inappropriateness) of the colonial mentality and show how this mentality was constituted. It is the role of the League’s educational programs, like the LSI summer school, to revalorize “Southern” identity so that “Southerners” can feel proud of who they are and prepare themselves for the struggle to reclaim “their land,” thereby creating a resistance identity.

In fact, the LSI stresses the vital role this identity reconstruction plays in the “Southern” nationalist movement, and the idea is that the damage caused by that which is being resisted must be repaired before mobilization can occur.

Made up of the South’s finest unreconstructed scholars, the LSI is dedicated to combating the demonisation¹⁰ of the South and its culture and heritage in the academic arena. . . . As the intellectual leaders of the Southern movement, LSI members and associates seek to restore a solid cultural foundation which will nourish and sustain a free and prosperous people. Without such a foundation, all

other facets of the Southern movement—political, social, and economic—will not flourish. (www.lsinstitute.org)

From the League’s perspective, to “restore a solid cultural foundation” the stereotypical representations of “Southerners” that are characteristic of internal orientalism must be challenged—not at the national scale, but in “the South” itself. In fact, being a “Southerner” entails not just dealing with the attitudes toward the region that are held outside the southeastern states, but also requires engagement with “Southerners” who do not understand the full meaning of their heritage.

To be clear, not all League members experienced a colonial mentality. Anne wrote that she was in no way affected by the negative perceptions of “the South”:

The negative stereotypes have come about from bald-faced lies and huge distortions of the truth from those who hate the South, who are jealous of the South, and who would seek to destroy us. This has been so from near the beginning of this country and has been aided and abetted by the media from the time there was a media . . . and it only gets worse. We are a different people than those of the Northeast and actually all other parts of the country, and the nosy-Parkers of New England and other parts of the North cannot for the life of them leave us alone. And that is all we want.

We see here that Anne conceives of “the South” as fundamentally different from “the North” and in that respect she expresses a “Southern” nationalism that does not unsettle the basic epistemology of internal orientalism, which sees the imagined spaces of “South” and “North” and “America” as radically distinct. To that extent, this “Southern” nationalism is a derivative discourse. Anne’s comments also illustrate that “Southern” identity is formed through the scalar interaction between the region and the nation, as her sense of being a “Southerner” cannot be separated from the discursive relations between “the South” and the rest of the country. The League’s “Southern” identity constitutes a resistance identity precisely because of this interaction across scales; “the South” is different, and to preserve its difference in light of “Northern” assaults on its culture, it must resist “the North.”

Indeed, for many of the League members the very meaning of “Southern” identity and “Southern” heritage was imbued with the notion of resistance. In this case, the resistance identity signifies resistance in and of itself. Patrick’s comment is representative:

Southern heritage means to me a deep suspicion of authority and the right to question, dissent, and refuse. Southern heritage is the “Rebel”—it has been used and abused and

misused—but rebellion and resistance are important aspects of Southern heritage. (questionnaire)

For the League members, “Southern” heritage and history are relevant to today’s struggles because they demonstrate that the very essence of the “Southern” experience has been characterized by resistance; in their eyes, “the South” has had to resist multiple “Northern” campaigns to subdue, tame, and assimilate the region.

This association of “Southern” heritage and identity with resistance carries over to that contentious symbol, the Confederate battle flag. The flag design is based on St. Andrew’s cross, and this connection to Christianity was central for most of the respondents (see Jansson forthcoming). Many of them told me the legend of St. Andrew refusing to be crucified on the same kind of cross as Jesus (to indicate his unworthiness to be compared to Jesus, he requested his executioners to tilt the cross to form an X instead of a T). As Ben explained, the flag is “not just a symbol of the South or the Southern people . . . but a symbol of resistance to tyranny, through Andrew’s resistance, the Scots’ resistance, and right down to the Southern people.” Thus the flag symbolizes both Christianity and resistance. Tom elaborated on the flag’s association with resistance:

For me, they’re . . . a sign of resistance, a sign that says you can push us around only so far, and then understand that we will not tolerate whatever it is anymore. It’s a symbol that’s been used around the world for that exact reason, in the Berlin Wall, in Somalia, or in Iraq, people fly the flag in defiance, and in defiance of totalitarian regimes, or just countries that look like they’re on the way to empire.¹¹

The conceptualization of the flag as a symbol of resistance and Christianity makes it all the more potent and emotionally charged for the League members.

With all this talk about resistance, one might wonder exactly what is being resisted. We might say that they are resisting the thread of the national discourse that casts “the South” in a negative light, as well as what they experience as unjust power relations between “North” and “South.” One of the goals of this article, however, is to explore how individuals psychologically experience internal orientalism. As we have seen, Kevin and Anne referred to the “hatred” of “the South.” Many (if not most) of the League members are truly convinced that the rest of the country hates them because they are “Southerners”; thus the othering of internal orientalism can be experienced as hatred. Robert Salyer, one of the speakers at the League’s annual meeting, told the audience: “They don’t hate the flag—they hate you!”

Clyde Wilson (a League founder and history professor at the University of South Carolina) went even further in his summer school talk (“Why Confederate Soldiers Are Admired in the Civilized World”). Wilson attacked feminism, “Marxist agitprop” in the academy, and the immoral tactics of the U.S. military in the first Iraq war. He asked the question “Why does the North hate us?” Part of the answer was that “America” equals quantity, whereas “the South” equals quality. He mentioned former New York Governor Pataki’s removal of Georgia’s banner from a state flag display at the capitol in Albany because it featured the Confederate battle flag. Other anecdotes followed: A school student was suspended for drawing a St. Andrew’s cross, a worker was fired for having a battle flag on his toolbox. His conclusion: “What we have here is a massive program of ethnic cleansing.” Wilson argued that “Southerners” were, in fact, in danger of disappearing: “You demonize a people’s culture and the next logical step is to get rid of them entirely.” He was talking about extermination. As Ben put it, “Southern heritage is something repressed, is something that in many areas, it seems to me and to a lot of us here, is undergoing a direct and premeditated assault with the aim of extermination.”

It is important to tread this ground carefully. Certainly, the flagging of “hate” and “extermination” serves rhetorical purposes, a way to agitate and motivate activists, but it seemed to me that few of the respondents or speakers employed these terms solely as rhetoric. They truly believe that they are hated and targeted for extermination. Bauman (1989, 72–77) argued that the Germans could conceive of the extermination of the Jews because of the intense demonization to which they were subjected prior to the Holocaust. To the extent that League members feel that they belong to a group that is viciously demonized, they demonstrate a perhaps unconscious awareness of what potentially follows the demonization of a population.

Perhaps this sounds crazy, but to make sense of this we must understand how the League defines the “Southern people.” Many League members wholeheartedly embrace the “Celtic thesis”¹² and celebrate their Scotch-Irish ancestry, thus endorsing an ethnic-based definition of the nation (and it is this definition critics have in mind when they refer to the League as racist). Indeed, some scholars argue that groups like the League attempt to capitalize on the language of multiculturalism by advancing an ethnic identity that allows white people to claim the status of an Other and simultaneously preserve white privilege (McCarthy and Hague 2004; Hague, Giordano and Sebesta 2005; Vanderbeck 2006). The

League realizes, though, that there have been no mass killings of “Southerners,” no forced relocations, and no Trail of Tears. Thus the “ethnic cleansing” Wilson alleges is more an attack on the imagined community of the nation (Anderson 1991) and reflects (in their eyes) a systematic campaign to convince “Southerners” that they are inferior and need to embrace “American” modernity if they are to survive.¹³ They do not fear the bodily death of the “Southern people” but rather their psychological (and ideological) death. If “Southerners” stop thinking of themselves as “Southerners,” stop honoring their “Southern” heritage, stop learning their “Southern” history (all as defined by the League), the “Southern” nation (as an imagined community) will cease to exist. It will have been exterminated;¹⁴ hence the life-or-death importance of resistance.

This resistance to “extermination” plays out in the landscape. Alderman and Beavers (1999) have identified three trends regarding place names in the southeastern states—de-Confederatization, African Americanization, and re-Confederatization—that reflect struggles to shape the cultural landscape. It is in this context that defense of (and attacks on) Confederate monuments and symbols like the battle flag takes place. Bea saw defending the Confederate presence in the “Southern” landscape as a pressing need. In response to a question regarding the role of the League as an organization, she replied:

Well, I think confronting whenever there's a challenge to the flag, which I think is kind of gone . . . the Southern symbols and monuments are really under attack, and usually it's being done underhandedly. . . . And that's what makes me so happy that there are people like Dr. Hill . . . every time one of those things happens they go right away and draw attention to it and get public support, and then it stops and they'll wait for a while and then they'll do it again. But I think that's very wrong, they want to erase history . . . that makes me angry.

These words illustrate why conflict over the battle flag is so intense and emotional for people like the League members. They see their very existence as a people, as a nation, at stake.

As I argued earlier, this “Southern” nation is racialized by internal orientalism such that “Southerner” most often refers to a white person. But to what extent do the League members themselves racialize the “Southern” nation? We have already seen that some consider the League a hate group, and the League’s own statements in defense of a white “Southern” culture can be seen to leave very little room for nonwhite (and even

non-Celtic) peoples. Some of the respondents echoed this view, endorsing a strict ethnic definition for the “Southern” nation. For example, Anne wrote: “I identify Southerners as Anglo-Celtic folks . . . white.” Similarly, Steve stated in his interview that “I personally consider white Southerners as my people.” As Joyce put it, “I hope you don’t consider being racist if you like one race, I mean it’s like my husband said earlier, we love our own race more than we love someone else’s.”

Overall, however, the interviewees were somewhat more likely to argue that people of any race could be “Southerners,” and that “Southern culture” united blacks and whites in the region.¹⁵ As Kevin told me:

I find culturally, blacks that I work with are culturally more my brothers than you are, as a person being from Long Island and Pennsylvania . . . from the cultural perspective, I tell a black person that you’re my cultural brother, as compared to this Caucasian person who is working in the same company where I’m working from Indianapolis, Indiana. Why? I eat the same food that this black person eats; I worship God the same way he worships God. I don’t have the accent that this person from Indiana has.

Likewise, Michael said, “I do not think of myself as belonging to a racial group as a Southerner. I think I belong to a group that shares a set of ideas, and to me the color is irrelevant.” And Wilson (2007, 18) has argued that “Southern blacks share with Southern whites nearly every aspect of Southern culture except ethnic origin and political behavior, and differ from general American attitudes in the same direction as do white Southerners.”¹⁶

As these responses make clear, the League is not united on this issue. During the summer school some participants made blatantly racist comments, which bothered Patrick:

I think the League of the South is trying to do some good things (particularly in its historical and cultural activism), but I also think it has some problems—particularly some nonsense about Anglo-Saxon values—a foolishly (and racistly) phrased statement that ostensibly promotes conservatism. I would like to point out, though, it is that rebellious, reactionary posture that is characteristically Southern and the racism, particularly today seems to me to be the result of the desperate political gambit forced on any organization promoting Southerness. (questionnaire)

Interestingly, although Patrick criticizes the League for racist statements, he attributes such “foolishness” to the “characteristically Southern” trait of rebelliousness and also argues that such a “reactionary posture” is provoked by external forces. Patrick demonstrates here an

understanding that the League's ideology is shaped at least in part by the larger political context within which the group operates. Patrick's insight is key here, as it suggests that the racialization of "Southern" identity by internal orientalism is mirrored by the actions of the League, and that this occurs because of the structure of internal orientalism. In other words, because white "Southerners" are the main target of internal orientalism, some of them respond by defending their white "Southernness." The divergence of views discussed in this section, and the fact that the League tends to publicly equate "Southerner" with white, suggests that the racialization of "Southerner" is a potential fault line within the organization.

The psychogeography of internal orientalism, as experienced by League members, can be characterized by a feeling that non-"Southerners" see "the South" as an inferior part of the United States. At its most extreme, it is interpreted as demonization and hatred. This dynamic can result in a "colonial mentality" and/or a rejection by "Southerners" of their "true" heritage, resulting in the need for resistance if the "Southern" nation is to continue to exist. Such resistance is not only directed outward but also involves resistance to the traces of internal orientalism *within* one's psyche. That the League's resistance identity is shaped by internal orientalism is suggested by the League's *Grey Book* (a collection of essays arguing the case for "Southern" distinctiveness and calling for "Southern" independence). The title of chapter 9 is "Achieving Independence: Turning an Upside-Down World Right-Side Up" (League of the South 2004, 74), suggesting a flipping of the internal orientalist binary so that "the South" occupies the privileged position (Figure 4).

Like the vast majority of the battles of the Civil War, the League's efforts are focused on the terrain of the southeastern states; rather than trying to alter national institutions, they seek to withdraw from them. African Americans, of course, constitute a substantial portion of this "Southern" terrain, and a study of internal orientalism requires a consideration of how they might experience, and react to, the discourse. It is to the views of some black "Southerners" that we now turn.

"Not Bad" or "a Great and Confusing Frustration": Black "Southern" Identities

We saw in the previous section that League members might translate their structural position within the discourse of internal orientalism as a demonization of

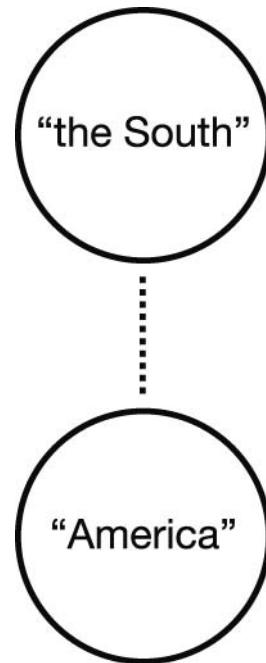


Figure 4. The League of the South's revalorization of the internal orientalist binary.

their very existence. I argued earlier that internal orientalism targets white "Southerners" most directly and thus African Americans have a different relationship to the discourse. In this section we explore the relationship that some black residents of the southeastern states have to the discourse of internal orientalism in light of the racialization of "Southern" identity. The empirical data come from thirty-one interviews I conducted with African Americans in and around Lynchburg, Virginia, in 2003.

From the time they were brought to the New World, Africans and their descendants have been excluded from the imagined spaces of "America" and "the South," first by slavery (informed by white supremacist ideologies) and then through various forms of segregation. African Americans nonetheless had a special connection to the southeastern states due to the fact that the vast majority of the black population called "the South" their home. Racial oppression and limited economic opportunities in the southeastern states led millions of black "Southerners" to make their way to "the North," which many saw as a promised land, during what was to be called the Great Migration. Many were to be disappointed with the racism they experienced in "the North," and during the second half of the twentieth century the tide reversed, as African Americans began moving to the southeastern states in large numbers, some returning to their roots (Frank 1999), others

having never lived there before (Aiken 2001). Some, like former Atlanta mayor Andrew Young, even argued that “the South” had “always been a better place to live than the North, even during segregation” (Garneau 1981, 159). Emboldened by the political gains won through the difficult struggles of the Civil Rights era, black “Southerners” increasingly made their presence felt on the cultural landscape through, for example, the changing of street names (Alderman 1996). In response, some white “Southerners” tried to reassert the Confederate-ness (and whiteness) of the landscape through the defense of Confederate monuments and the public display of the battle flag (Aiken 2001).

In spite (or perhaps because) of their intense struggles for basic civil rights and human dignity, many African Americans in the southeastern states developed an intense connection to their “homeland.” Many black “Southerners” made the move north only reluctantly and only when the collapse of the plantation economies forced their hand (Aiken 2001). This deep attachment enticed many to return home to take their own stand; Thadious Davis saw the “increasingly frequent pattern of black return migration” as “a laying of claim to a culture and to a region that, though fraught with pain and difficulty, provides a major grounding for identity” (Davis 1988, 6). Today this identity is a “Southern” identity; polls reveal that African Americans in the southeastern states are at least as likely as whites, not more so, to identify themselves as “Southerners” (Webster and Leib 2001). “Not only were blacks just as likely as whites to identify themselves as southerners by the 1990s,” according to Cobb (1999, 43), “but in many cases, they actually seemed more confident of what that meant.”

This was true for many of the respondents in my study, where approximately half embraced “Southern” identity, and many did so warmly.¹⁷

I feel strongly that I’m a Southerner, I can’t get away from that. I haven’t been anywhere but Lynchburg, and I feel good about being a Southerner, that I’ve come through these struggles. . . . I’m proud now of being a Southerner. . . . So I guess I would say, the South is not bad. (Esther)

The fact that Esther embraced “Southern” identity is in itself an act of resistance of internal orientalism’s racialization of the imagined space of “the South.” This is the first sense in which the views of the black “Southerners” in my study relate to the dynamic of resistance with regard to internal orientalism. (Esther’s comment that “the South is not bad” suggests a desire to focus on

her success story and perhaps also a recognition that in the eyes of many, “the South” is in fact “bad.”)

The theme of resistance emerged in another way in these interviews, relating to the legacy of the long struggles against racism and segregation. When asked what the term *Southern heritage* meant to him, Carlton answered:

I would probably identify with those Southerners who fought against systemic oppression, fought against slavery, fought against racism. I would identify with *that* Southern, because there is a great heritage from the South, particularly amongst the religious community that rose up to combat those sentiments. . . . Southern heritage in that context means having the strength to stand up against that which is destructive to freedom.

These thoughts were echoed by another participant answering the same question:

When I think of the term Southern heritage that brings me back to what my heritage is, and all based on where I come from, what the Civil Rights did for me, and where I came from, and into my history. I think too when I grew up I can remember not being able to ride the city buses, I remember the schools being segregated, going to an all-black elementary school, I can remember desegregation when it started, when blacks were allowed to go to the white schools. (Cedric)

For both these participants, “Southern heritage” related directly to their (personal and collective) experiences fighting for basic human rights and dignity. They can claim ownership of “Southern” identity even though it signifies the resistance to a racist social order. The struggles are in fact seen in a positive light, as a mark of the tenacity, persistence, and integrity of their communities. This provides a tremendously strong foundation for pride in their “Southernness” for African Americans in the southeastern states. The “Southern” identity embraced by these respondents is inseparable from their consciousness as *black* “Southerners”—thus we see here a kind of reracialization of “Southern” identity, from the whitewashed “Southern” of internal orientalism to a “Southern” that connotes black culture and history. For some, this reracialization connects with hip-hop’s notion of the “dirty South,” a phrase “loaded with implications in terms of the South’s history as a site of social, economic, legal, and political repression and disfranchisement for African Americans in the United States” (Richardson 2007, 215).¹⁸ One of the younger respondents from Lynchburg said that although she did not really see herself as a

“Southerner,” she did identify with the “dirty South” “because it includes blacks” (Kim).

I characterize this embrace of “Southern” identity as a form of resistance to internal orientalism, a challenge to the equating of “Southern” with “white.” There is also an aspect of the Lynchburg interviews that might reinforce internal orientalism, however. As we have seen, some of the respondents associated “Southern” heritage and identity with a struggle against racism. When I asked Maria if there was a time when she first became aware of having a “Southern” identity, she replied:

I can’t remember any specific time, unless it was segregation. I grew up with the strictest I guess segregation in Lynchburg, the signs were up, there were things that you definitely couldn’t do. But as a child I didn’t know that, I would hear my parents talk about it, but—I knew it, but you know, it was a part of my life, yeah, if I heard them talk about it. Besides, when I grew up they had streetcars in Lynchburg, and the signs were in the streetcars, whites to the front and coloreds to the rear.

Others were also quick to associate their “Southern” identity with segregation. Answering the same question, Loretta said:

I think I was always aware of it, because see . . . I started school before integration, when the schools were definitely separate but unequal. I can remember we walked to school . . . we walked because they didn’t have buses for us. . . . And the whites would have buses, they would ride past us on the buses, we would be walking and they would be shouting something to us and we’d throw something at the bus. . . . So, it was evident that things were not equal.

What is interesting is that when I asked about other forms of geographic identity, such as those related to city (Lynchburg), state (Virginia), or country, these experiences with racism and segregation were never brought up. These hardships were interpreted as “Southern” experiences instead of “American” (or Virginian, etc.). The regional scale was paramount here. I suggest that this is an effect of internal orientalism, and to this extent the views of the respondents reinforce internal orientalism’s “Southernization” of the (national) social problems of racism and segregation.

So far I have been discussing the views of the respondents who defined themselves as “Southerners.” Not all of the participants in Lynchburg were able to claim “Southern” identity for themselves, though. Indeed, African Americans have often had an ambivalent and conflicted relationship with “Southern” identity (Richardson 2007). During a graduate class in “South-

ern” history at a historically black college shortly before the Civil Rights era, Professor L. D. Reddick (1960, 133–34) asked his students “Who is a Southerner?”

The ensuing discussion was most animated. Almost all of the students admitted that they were Southerners but only half of them appeared to be happy about this. Most were sharply critical of the treatment of Negroes in Dixie but invariably became defensive whenever they told of aspersions that were cast on their homeland by northern Negroes. Apparently, Negro as well as white Southerners—especially while on visits “up North”—can be embarrassed by the reputation that their region has acquired.¹⁹

Reddick added that the perceptions of “the South” can result in an inner “war” within some of the region’s African Americans: “Some of them hate the South; others, despite everything, love it. Most, however, alternate their love and hate, while a few seem to be capable of loving and hating at the same time. It is a great and confusing frustration” (Reddick 1960, 133–34).

Reddick’s words eloquently describe the feelings of some of the respondents who refused to see themselves as “Southerners.” The most moving example is that of a retired minister. When I asked him to what extent he had a “Southern” identity, Rev. Stevenson gave poignant expression to this “great and confusing frustration”:

One of the things I resent about the South is that . . . it has robbed me both of the ability to make a claim . . . to a lot of stuff I like that truly is a part of being Southern, but which I can’t identify with because of all that it means and all the negative overtones associated with it. I mean this is the South that fought a bloody civil war to keep me in slavery and that gave birth to Jim Crow and all of that, so that no matter how at home I feel in the South, no matter how much I may like Southern culture, I can’t identify with it, not because there’s some law that prohibits it—the better part of my being prohibits it. . . . It’s like eating Southern fried chicken with poison in it. . . . So, I’m a Southerner geographically and can identify with that—and this is where I like to live . . . but I have been robbed of my right to identify as a Southerner with Southern culture. So culturally I am not Southern.

The passion and pain behind these words is impossible to convey in print. For whatever reason, Rev. Stevenson felt incapable of redefining a “Southern” cultural identity for himself, and thus he had to distance himself from the notion of “Southerner” that serves as the Other of internal orientalism. He seemed wounded as a result. This potential redefinition was apparently a path that was not open to Rev. Stevenson, and it is

difficult to say why he lacked the agency (or at least the perception of the possibility of agency) that some of the others employed. Ultimately, the “negative overtones” associated with “Southern” identity prevent Rev. Stevenson from assimilating this identity for himself. Interestingly, although he ends by claiming he is not “Southern” culturally, this assertion contradicts much of what he just said. The problem, clearly, is in the label “Southerner” itself and its negative connotations. Many of the other respondents who rejected “Southern” identity cited similar concerns, revealing an inability or lack of desire to rearticulate a regional identity that (for them) had been hijacked by whites and wielded by them in the effort to keep African Americans down.

In this section, therefore, we begin to get a sense of how the psychogeography of African Americans in the southeastern states might be informed by the discourse of internal orientalism. Some will redefine the internal orientalist construction of “Southern” identity in a way that reflects their own experiences, including their struggles with racism and segregation. By embracing “Southern” identity, they potentially undermine internal orientalism’s association of “Southern” with “white” and thus resist the discourse. At the same time, because of the history of slavery, segregation, racial violence, and oppression, “Southern” identity is unavoidably about resistance for many, although this, of course, is not the same resistance in which the League engages. Ironically, this association of “Southern” identity with racism and segregation might reinforce the internal orientalist assumption that these problems are inherently “Southern” in a way that they are not inherently “American.” Finally, for some African Americans, the weight of the negative representations of “the South” irreversibly poisons “Southern” identity, making this identity psychologically unavailable to them. The African Americans in this study embody a perhaps contradictory relationship to internal orientalism, in that they challenge some of the basic assumptions of the discourse while simultaneously reinforcing others.

Conclusion

In the animal kingdom, the rule is, eat or be eaten; in the human kingdom, define or be defined. (Szasz 1974, 20, quoted in Nandy 1983, 112)

In this article about the geography of defining certain segments of the “human kingdom,” I have not addressed the increasing racial and ethnic diversity in the southeastern states (H. A. Smith and Furuseth 2006). The

League certainly sees this development as a threat to the “Southern” people, but my study of internal orientalism focuses on representations of “the South” and articulations of “Southern” identity, and it is not yet clear how the changing demographics in the region will alter what it means to be “Southern”—for those inside and outside the region. “The South remains mostly black and white” (McPherson 2003, 15), and within internal orientalism it is clearly African Americans who are the crucial “structuring absence.” Although B. E. Smith (2006, 235) argued that “[r]acial/ethnic diversification opens up the fixity of the south’s bipolar racial construct,” I think the potential of this process is largely unfulfilled when it comes to representations of the region and the dominant constructions of “Southern” identity. This is an ongoing process, however, and much remains to be seen.

I am also aware that some might consider the framework of internal orientalism provocative when used to analyze the relationship between “the South” and “America” to the extent that it suggests a moral equivalence between white “Southerners” and oppressed peoples in the Third World.²⁰ Indeed, although scholars tend to romanticize “resistance” (Sharp et al. 2000; Cresswell and Dixon 2002), this reflex is unlikely to be triggered if we place white “Southerners” in the frame. That this would be true in part because of internal orientalism does not deflect criticism that such implied moral equivalences between white “Southerners” and truly oppressed peoples are irresponsible and invalidate the line of inquiry. Whereas some might want to identify moral parallels (and make it clear which side “we” should be on), in this article I discuss the structural parallels (as well as divergences). I trust readers to make their own judgments about what is just and who deserves one’s support, sympathy, or scorn.

There is thus a possibility that an examination of the othering of internal orientalism can be interpreted as a “defense” of the Other(s). Indeed, Said himself faced the criticism that by critiquing Orientalism he was in fact obstructing scrutiny and criticism of real injustices in the Orient itself (Dijkink 1996). My project seeks to understand, not to excuse, a goal made more challenging by the fact that the rethinking of spatial identities is “emotionally fraught” and “liable to touch on deep feelings and desires” (Massey 2004, 6). Historian Drew Gilpin Faust (1988, 3) argued that this touchiness has influenced the historiography of the southeastern states due to a “fear that accepting the reality of Confederate nationalism would somehow imply its legitimacy.” A generation earlier, Potter (1968, 13) argued that

histories of “the South” were expected to offer a clear condemnation of the region, whereas Potter argued for the importance of understanding the object of study. He emphasized that understanding does not mean excusing, and I would simply echo those sentiments here.

One of the useful aspects of adopting the framework of internal orientalism to analyze the production of the “America”/“South” binary is that it encourages us to look beyond the borders of “the South” for the source of “Southern” identity. That is, the meaning of “the South” is forged in the relations between people inside and outside the region, across space, and over cognitive and political boundaries. This bears keeping in mind with regard to the notion that “the South” is “still fighting the Civil War” (Horwitz 1998; Goldfield 2002). Those (whites) who would assertively project their “Southern” identity are often understood as metaphorically rehashing the “War Between the States,” an assessment that focuses on one side of the internal orientalist binary and ignores entirely the culpability of the other side. Scholars have recently shown that “the sources of Southern nationalism are also to be found in the North” (Parish 2003, 130; see also Norton 1986; Grant 2000), in that “Southern” and “Northern” nationalisms are produced through interregional political power struggles and are not born and raised, as it were, solely within one region or the other. In other words, they are both products of a socio-spatial dialectic (and one with a strong psychological dimension), a dialectic that binds these spaces and transcends borders (while it simultaneously seeks to reify them). It takes two sides to fight a war, and if some “Southerners” are still fighting the Civil War it might be because they experience the words and actions of others (inside and outside the southeastern states) as hostile provocations; they confront a “North” that did not stop its assaults in 1865. I say this not to place blame (for blame is irrelevant here) but to emphasize that one of the things we learn from this article is that articulations of “the South” and “Southern” identity are best understood from an interscalar perspective and not by considering “Southernness” as something produced solely in “the South.” Internal orientalism is an “identity-making machine” (D. Gregory 1997, 271) that joins “Northerners” and “Southerners” in a dance of mutual essentializations.

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Notes

1. The *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* recently published an article (Vandello, Cohen, and Ransom 2008) about the differences in the perceptions of norms about aggression between “Northerners” and “Southerners” wherein the authors did not find it necessary to qualify these labels with the adjective “white” anywhere in the article, even though they excluded African Americans completely from the study.
2. This is an important difference with Said’s Orientalism, where the spatial Other was subjected to a racialized differentiation. This difference is attenuated, though, to the extent that white “Southerners” are seen as ethnically different from other white “Americans” (Faust 1988; Reed 1993a).
3. The film *Mississippi Burning* is an excellent example (Jansson 2005a), where the black residents are more or less just part of the scenery, although an essential part.
4. Cobb (2005, 5) notes the irony of the segregationists’ defining a “Southern” identity that “effectively excluded the South’s black residents in much the same way that both black and white southerners had been ‘othered’ out of the construction of American identity.”
5. This is something that the League is not hesitant to point out (League of the South 2004, 76).
6. I have changed the names of the study participants. When a quote comes from a questionnaire instead of an interview, I specify that.
7. This recalls Johnston’s (1994) observation that “numerous quotidian molestations [can be] easily interpreted in the context of national subordination” (277).
8. This echoes the desire of a Confederate preacher that “Southerners” gain “mental independence” from “the North” (Roland 1982, 10).
9. It is interesting to note in this context that League president Michael Hill has confessed to finding in Gramsci “a goldmine of ideas” (Roberts 1997, 20).
10. As a way to “decolonize” the language of “Southerners,” the League recommends the usage of British spelling. The SPLC writes of Kibler: “His main contribution to the neo-Confederate movement . . . has been in persuading many of its leaders to adopt British orthography . . . to reflect the “Anglo-Celtic” origins of white Southerners” (<http://www.splcenter.org/intel/intelreport/article.jsp?pid=845> [last accessed 25 October 2008]).

11. Others have mentioned the use of the battle flag outside the southeastern states, and as Horwitz (1998, 78) showed, even New Englanders can identify with the flag: "For me, the flag's mainly a symbol of resistance against government control, not a symbol of the South." In 2004 I personally saw the flag displayed prominently in a bar in Tallinn, Estonia, called, of all things, "Woodstock."
12. One of the key texts here is McWhiney (1988), in which he writes that the
- fundamental and lasting divisions between Southerners and Northerners began in colonial America when migrants from the Celtic regions of the British Isles—Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and Cornwall—and from the English uplands managed to implant their traditional customs in the Old South. From a solid eighteenth-century base in the southern backcountry, these people and their descendants swept westward decade after decade throughout the antebellum period until they had established themselves and their anti-English values and practices across the Old South. By 1860 they far outnumbered the combined total of all other white Southerners and their culture dominated the region. The antebellum North, on the other hand, was settled and influenced principally by people who had migrated from the English lowlands. (McWhiney 1988, xiii)
- For critiques see Current (1983) and Berthoff (1986).
13. Current (1983) has written of the attempts to "Northernize the South." He discussed the proposal of writer Tannenbaum in the 1920s that the federal government seek to increase European immigration to the southeastern states. "The 'incoming of large masses of foreigners with their varied racial strains, their different religious faiths,' he argued, would eventually destroy the Southern whites' 'morbid pride of race' and 'bitter sense of religious righteousness'" (Current 1983, 102).
14. Blee (2004, 49) found a similar fear among white supremacist groups that whites are facing extinction, although in their case it is multiculturalism and intermarriage that pose the threat.
15. Occasionally Native Americans were included in this more racially diverse notion of "Southerner."
16. As further evidence that the Celtic thesis is not universally embraced within the "Southern" nationalist movement, consider the following from the Florida League of the South's newsletter: "The Southern people, unusually mixed in their ancestry, can claim major influences from the English, Irish, Scottish, French, German, African, Spanish, and native Cherokee, Seminole and Creek tribes. All of these peoples have suffered under some type of slavery and all Southerners have a longing to be free" (D. Jones 2007). Of course, one cannot rule out that such public statements are a calculated response to the allegations that the League promotes a racist view of "Southern" identity.
17. Compare this to the polls from 1991 through 2001 that showed that 78 percent of African Americans in the region identified as "Southerners," as opposed to 75 percent of whites (Reeves 2005).
18. Interestingly, Richardson (2007, 215) noted that the term is reminiscent of "the historical status of the South as an 'abject' and 'excluded' geography in the United States," drawing on psychoanalysis; the parallels to internal orientalism are clear. The "dirty South" of black "Southerners" is certainly not the same abject "South" of their white neighbors, however.
19. As Cobb (1999) notes, some "Northern" blacks would refer derisively to "Southern" blacks as "Bamas," a term now embraced by some African Americans in the southeastern states (206–7).
20. I discuss this dilemma in detail in Jansson (2005b).

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Correspondence: Department of Social and Economic Geography, Uppsala University, Box 513, 75120 Uppsala, Sweden, e-mail: dj28@cornell.edu

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